

ON FIVE INTERESTING SHIELDS FROM NORTHERN
QUEENSLAND, WITH AN ENUMERATION OF THE
FIGURED TYPES OF AUSTRALIAN SHIELDS.

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(Plates XXXIII-XXXVIII.)

It affords me much pleasure to lay before the Society descriptions of two very curious shields from the Collection of Mr. Harry Stockdale, of Sydney, to whom my thanks are due for the opportunity of so doing, and three derived from other sources.

The first to be noticed is a wooden shield from Peak Downs, Central Queensland, the second, a weapon made from the carapace of a turtle, both being a modification of the type, or form, of the *Goolmarry* shield of the Queensland Blacks. The latter is one of the cleverest adaptations of a natural object to form a weapon of offence or defence that has yet come under my notice from any part of Australia. It was obtained by Mr. Stockdale in the Cooktown District of North-East Queensland.

The wooden shield is more oval, wider, and less elongate in its general proportions than the typical form of the *Goolmarry* figured by the late Mr. R. Brough Smyth,* but like the latter, possesses the distinctive feature of being carved on both aspects—back and front—an unusual practice amongst the Australian Aborigines, except in the northern portions of the Continent. It is a solid serviceable weapon, elongately-oval in shape, with an appreciable degree of thickness, and weighs three pounds twelve ounces. The length is twenty-one and a half inches and the

* Aborigines of Victoria, 1878, I. p. 334, f. 138.

width nine and a half inches. The outer surface, or front of the shield, is fairly convex, but without any trace of a median angularity. The back is practically flat, and the hand-hole is cut out of the wood by counter-sinking, and is quadrangular, five and a half inches wide by four and a half long. On the front the rounded apices are cut off by incised cross bars, and within these spaces are two nearly equilateral triangles, also incised. No other sculpture occurs on these terminal areas, but the wavy grain of the wood adds a very pleasing appearance to the surface of the shield. The intermediate general surface is divided into eight longitudinal sections, four broad central divisions, a marginal area on each side, and an intermarginal, following the latter on either hand. To all intents and purposes, therefore, although all of the divisions are not of equal breadth, the front of the shield exhibits a bilateral symmetry as to its ornamentation. The four central divisions are occupied by irregular triangles, filled in with equidistant incised lines of the herring-bone pattern. The longitudinal sections are each bounded by two continuous lines. The intermarginal zones are somewhat similarly sculptured except that the triangular areas are defined by three incised lines, instead of two. One of the marginal zones is devoid of ornamentation, the other bears a series of small triangles succeeding one another rapidly, against the edge of the contiguous intermarginal space.

On the inner side of the shield the sculpture is of quite a different character. It is divided into five horizontal divisions, a central one embracing the handle, and counter-sunk hand-hole, quite plain, and two above and below. The apical divisions each bear six incised triangles, two immediately at the rounded apices, and four in the second row. The intermediate divisions bear eight of these incised triangular spaces four in every row.

The result of this form of sculpture is that the intermediate portions of the shield surface is left in its natural state as variously shaped rhomboidal or diamond-shaped figures, with their sharp angles cut off, the two horizontal rows at either end of the shield being separated by a broad longitudinal belt. The grain of the wood is visible on all the outstanding portions of the surface.

On the outside of the shield there are still remaining traces of red colour at either end immediately within the transverse incised bars.

Lumboltz has figured* two shields of quite the same shape from "Central Queensland," and the hand-hole is also counter-sunk similarly. One has transverse end bars like the present weapon, and the ornament is produced by incision—three rhombs, and two half-rhombs in the centre, and five half-rhombs along each side in vertical series. The other has a central broad plain zone divided by an incised bar. Above and below the central zone are three transverse rows of quadrangular incisions, six to eight in a row.

I am not aware that a similar adaption of a turtle-shell has been recorded amongst Aboriginal implements, but my impression is that it has not. Australian shields comprise but a limited number of forms, and so far as I know, are invariably made either of wood or prepared bark. The second shield is, therefore, a particularly interesting one. The shield is remarkably well shaped, oval in outline, and forming a very handy weapon of defence. It has been reduced from the carapace of a Green Turtle (*Chelone mydas*, Linn.) apparently by sawing, and the rough edges bevelled off. Externally, the fabricator had commenced the removal of the tortoise-shell, but apparently finding that it detracted from the beauty of the weapon desisted, and contented himself, after the manner of his race, by plastering the surface with white pipe clay, traces of which still remain in the epidermic fittings and grooves of the bone structure. The median line of the shield was traversed by a broad band of red ruddle, and there are two similar transverse bands equidistant from each end. These are now in a great measure obliterated. The weight is two and a half pounds. The style of colouring is essentially after the type of the *Goolmurry* used in the Mackay District, North Queensland, but on the inner side the weapon is obviously quite devoid of colour or ornament of any kind. The

* Among Cannibals, 1890, p. 333.

shield consists of portions of the nuchal, and of the first and third vertebral plates. The second vertebral is the only entire plate remaining, but there are portions of the first and second costal plates on each side. Seen from below, or inside, it is found that the shield consists of portions of the nuchal, and of the first four neural plates. Part of the second dorsal vertebra, together with its anterior rib, has been cut away. The greater part of the fifth, and all the succeeding, have been entirely removed, as have also the free ends of the ribs articulating with the third and fourth vertebræ, so that the ribs between the second and third, and the fourth and fifth vertebræ form the supports for the shield handle, which consists of the vertebræ between them. A space has been cut between the latter and the carapace to admit the hand, the vertebræ forming the handle having been padded with fibre, and whipped with native string.

The total length of the carapace before mutilation was probably about three feet two inches ; now as a shield, it is seventeen inches, and the width seven and a half.

The third shield I desire to call attention to, is to all intents and purposes one of the *Goolmarry* type as regards form, but possessing only a modification of the ornamentation of the latter, and devoid of any sculpturing on the inner or flat side.

For this weapon I am indebted to Mr. L. Winter, of Bathurst, through Mr. G. K. Allen, late of the Geological Survey of N. S. Wales. It is from the Saxby River, a branch of the Flinders River near its mouth, and was picked up after an Aboriginal fight. Its genuineness is attested by the numerous spear marks, scattered over the surface.

The shield possesses all the features of the *Goolmarry* as regards form, size, and counter-sunk hand-hole, whilst both faces are very beautifully grooved by tool-marking. Ornamentation is confined to the convex or outer side, and consists of seven incised parallel cross-bars at both ends, the immediate apices being smooth. Across the centre are two complete and two half chevrons forming a continuous zig-zag figure, composed of four incised lines or

grooves. The weapon is composed of a light fig-tree wood, and only weighs one pound eight ounces. It is twenty-five inches in length, and eight inches in breadth.

The fourth shield, for which I am indebted to Dr. J. C. Cox, is an exceedingly fine weapon. It is from Angledool on the Narran River. In this case the wood is of a more solid description than that of the two preceding wooden examples, and is in consequence heavier. It is also, as regards form, of the modified *Goolmarry* type, with the hand-hole counter-sunk, convex on the outer face, and flat inside, but ornamented only on the outer. The shield is two feet long, and seven inches wide, with a thickness of about three inches, and the weight three pounds eleven ounces. The outer side is both incised and painted. We again meet with the plain apices, cut off by incised cross-bars. The remainder of the surface is wholly covered with fluctuating or serpentine longitudinal grooves, meeting and retreating, and so enclosing a series of broad oval, or indefinitely rhomboidal figures, arranged in such a manner that any five are in quincunx. The edges of the shield bear longitudinal grooves only. A central longitudinal zone, of about three inches, has been blackened, but the lateral zones, of about two inches each, are coloured with red pigment, edged with white lines, somewhat wavy, and broken up into eight or nine squares on each zone by white cross-bars.

The fifth and last shield is in some respects a very remarkable one. It is the smallest, heaviest in proportion to its size, and most convex on the outside, of the present collection, and from being ornamented on the inside falls strictly within the *Goolmarry* type. The sculpture is also of a very interesting and curious kind. It is made of a heavy, close-grained wood, light in colour, and is one foot eight inches long, five inches wide, about three inches thick, seven and a half inches transversely across the centre, or point of greatest convexity, and weighs three pounds four ounces, with the usual counter-sunk hand-hole. The apices in this shield are not delimited by incised cross-bars, but are formed by bodily cutting down the convex surface. The latter, as in Dr. Cox's shield, is subdivided into three longitudinal zones,

but not with the aid of colour. The central zone is two and a quarter inches wide and perfectly plain. The lateral zones are each divided down the centre by a continuous groove that forms the middle line of five chevrons on one side, and four on the other, fairly equidistant from one another. Each chevron is incised either with vertical grooves, or is cross-hatched, whilst the inter-chevron spaces are herring-boned by very regular grooves, increasing in acuteness of their angle at the two extremities of the weapon. The chevrons appear at one time to have been coloured red. The depressed apices of the shield each bear four zig-zag incised vertical grooves.

On the inner side the sculpture is very peculiar. The centre above and below the hand-hole is occupied by two and three series respectively of very irregular ovals bounded by from two to three grooves, and filled in with other obliquely directed grooves. The margins of the weapon, without the ovals, are occupied by oblique grooves, somewhat undereut, and in places anastomosing, giving rise to a reticulation in places, not unlike the net-work venation of the plant *Glossopteris*. The handle, and lateral edges of the hand-hole, are also obliquely grooved. At one end a small apical space is marked off by an incised cross-bar.

To the kindness of Mr. P. R. Pedley, I am indebted for the opportunity of describing this handy and unique weapon. Mr. Pedley informs me that this shield was formerly a cherished possession of "Paroo Jack," an Aboriginal gentleman who achieved distinction by getting five years for killing his gin. In the words of Mr. Pedley's correspondent, who obtained the weapon:—"He had a real fine gin, and the whites used to hang about his camp; so he killed her with a yam-stick." The shield was brought in by the trackers when "Paroo Jack" was arrested. The Paroo River rises in South Central Queensland and crossing the border between the latter and N. S. Wales unites with the Darling River at Killara. Through the authenticity of this shield, and Dr. Cox's from Angledool, we are thus able to show the extension of the *Goolmarr*y type a very considerable distance to the south of Peak Downs, where Mr. Stockdale's example was obtained.

If the *Goolmarry* type is to be strictly confined to shields of this character, and of the first one described from Peak Downs, together with Brough Smyth's figured example, ornamented on both sides, whether by incision or colouration, then the third shield from the Saxby River, and the fourth from Angledool will constitute an additional type to those enumerated further on, but I think form and general proportions must be allowed to outweigh minor characters, such as the foregoing.

Even as regards outline we evidently have three varieties, the broad oval shield from Peak Downs; the intermediate one from Angledool; and the narrow from the Saxby and Paroo Rivers.

I have thus been able to demonstrate six varieties of ornamentation, including Brough Smyth's and Lumbholtz's weapons, as applied to the *Goolmarry*, and a seventh is supplied in the fine shield lately described* from the Alligator River, Northern Territory.

The following epitome of Australian shields will perhaps be found of use to those who may have occasion to study the subject. Every variation is not recorded, but merely the principal types:—

a. Mulga (Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, 1878, I. figs. 112-124, *types*). A narrow elongate shield, slightly convex, or flattened on the obverse or outside, and roof-shaped, or angular on the reverse or inside. The handle-hole is counter-sunk, and the surface usually highly ornate with incised carving. The *Mulga* was used in single combat, and was originally termed the *Hieleman* by Surveyor-General Lieut. Col. Mitchell as early as 1836. It is the *Murgon* of the Lower Murray (*Smyth*); the *Marr-aga* of Gippsland (*Smyth*); and the *Carrbinua* of Kimberley (*Hardman*). The same form of weapon evidently also extended to Central Australia for Angas figures one from Lake Frome†, but without name. The *Woonda*‡ of W. Australia may possibly belong to this type, or will possibly form a separate division.

* Macleay Mem. Vol. (Linn. Soc. N. S. Wales), 1893, t. 33, f. 2-4.

† S. Australia Illustrated, 1846, t. 30, f. 5 & 6.

‡ Smyth, *Loc. cit.* p. 339, f. 148.

b. Drummung (Smyth, *Loc. cit.*, p. 231, f. 126-129, *types*). A narrow wooden shield, angular or roof-shaped both back and front, with the front bowed in outline, and tapering rapidly to both extremities. The handle is counter-sunk. It is also used in single combat. It is the *Tawarang** from high up the Murray River, and other parts of N. S. Wales. Dr. Knight in his account of the savage weapons displayed at the Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876 called † this shield *Towerang*, and again erroneously the *Mulga*, overlooking Smyth's excellent figures of the latter, and the distinction drawn by him. It is the *Drummung* of W. Victoria (*Smyth*).

c. Gee-am, or Kerreem (Smyth, *Loc. cit.*, p. 331, p. 333, f. 131-132, *types*; Angas, *S. Australia Illustrated*, 1846, t. 6, f. 2 & 3). Broad elongately rhomboidal or oval spear shields, made of gum tree bark, obtusely pointed top and bottom, flat or very slightly convex on the outside, and flat or a very little concave on the inside. The handle projects from the inner side, and is either a part of the wood of the tree next to the bark, from which the shield is made; or, consists of a separate piece of wood thrust through two holes in the weapon made for the purpose. It is used in the *mêlée*, and not in single combat. It is the *Bam-er-ook* of Gippsland (*Smyth*); and the *Carrillie* of Port Stephens, N. S. Wales (*R. Dawson*). It is interesting to note that this is the shield always depicted in our rock carvings throughout the Sydney District, ‡ and is recognisable not only by its shape, but also by the rather expanded apices or ends.

d. Mulabakka (Angas, *S. Australia Illustrated*, 1846, t. 6. f. 1, and 14, *types*; Smyth, *Loc. cit.* p. 333, f. 133-137.) This is a modification or variety of the *Gee-am*, and is made of wood or bent bark, with an inserted handle, distinct from the shield. It should properly, perhaps, be included under the *Gee-am*, but possesses a more graceful outline, and is longer at the projecting ends. This form of shield is both carved and painted, and is furthermore

* Angas, *S. Australia Illustrated*, 1846, t. 47, f. 5.

† Ann. Report Smithsonian Inst. for 1879 [1880], p. 283, p. 285, f. 134.

‡ See Records Geol. Survey N. S. Wales, 1890, ii. Pt. 1, t. 2, f. 809.

ornamented with two or more incised half ovals, drawn at the sides, or top and bottom. It certainly forms a transition between the *Gee-am* and the much better marked shield to follow next in order, the *Wakkalte*. The *Mulabakka* was used by the Mount Barker, and certain of the Darling and Murray Scrub Tribes (*Angas*), but in other parts of *S. Australia* was called *Tar-ram* (*Eyre*).

e. Wakkalte (*Angas*, *S. Australia Illustrated*, 1846, t. 6, top r. h. fig., *type*). A short and very much expanded form of the *Gee-am*, made of bark, and bent. The handle is formed by insertion through previously prepared holes, similar to that of one form of the true *Gee-am*. It is also generally a painted weapon. The *Wakkalte* shield was used by the Lake Alexandrina, Encounter Bay and Corong Tribes of the south-east coast line of *S. Australia* (*Angas*). The method of manufacture is well described by Mr. Edward Stephens* in an interesting account of the Aborigines of that district.

f. Goolmarry (*Smyth*, *Loc. cit.*, p. 334, f. 138, *type*). A smaller and neat long-oval shaped or elliptical shield, flat or a little rounded on the back, and gently convex, or subangular on the front, with the handle formed by counter-sinking; variously incised and painted on both aspects. The distribution of this shield appears to be somewhat extensive; thus, at Mackay on the north-east coast it is, according to *Smyth*, called *Goolmarry*; we next know the same weapon from the Alligator River, Port Darwin†, but unfortunately I am unacquainted with the local name.

g. ? (*Smyth*, *Loc. cit.*, p. 334, f. 139, *type*). For the seventh type I am quite unprovided with a name. The shields of this type are restricted to Queensland, and consist of large irregularly oval weapons, made from a light, possibly fig-tree wood. The outer side is more or less convex, and often with a central knob or boss. The inner side is flat, and the handle projects, being formed by cutting away the wood on both sides. On

* *Journ. R. Soc. N.S. Wales for 1889 [1890]*, xxiii. p. 487.

† *Etheridge*, *Macleay Mem. Vol. 1893*, p. 241, t. 23, f. 2-4.

the outer side, the surface is ornamented by concentric or irregular lines painted in red, white, and yellow, dividing the surface more or less into fields. These shields differ from all others over the Continent, and form very striking objects. Smyth figures one from Rockingham Bay, and Lumholtz* from Herbert Vale, Central Queensland. The latter author remarks that the pattern differs on each shield, thereby indicating ownership.

h. ? (Wood, Nat. Hist. Man, Vol. Australia, 1870, p. 55, f. 1 and 2, *type*.) A large oval shield flat or nearly so on the outer side. Straight along the lateral edges, and rounded top and bottom, with incised ornament on the outside. The hand-hole is countersunk. Neither dimensions nor locality are given by the Rev. G. Wood, but a similar weapon is figured by Dr. Knight† as the “heilaman, or war-shield of N.S. Wales,” and is said to be made of the wood of the “gigantic nettle tree.” These are the only references relating to this very marked weapon with which I am acquainted. Knight appears to confound it with the *Gee-am*, but judging from his figure, which quite corresponds with that of Wood, it certainly is not.

i. ? (Wood, *Loc. cit.*, p. 56, f. 1, *type*.) A short broad, roundly quadrangular shield somewhat convex outside, almost flat inside, and with a countersunk hand-hole. Wood’s illustration is the only figure of this shield I am acquainted with. It partakes to some extent of the characters of *h*, but is much shorter and broader in proportion. The district in which this shield is used, and the name have yet to be ascertained.

A tenth well marked type would exist could we accept figures given by Dr. Knight in his description of the Philadelphia weapons previously referred to. He there describes,‡ as shown in the Victorian section of the Exhibition, and therefore ostensibly from Victoria, large oval cricket bat-shaped shields with a distinct handle, and said to be made of bark. Slight ornamentation occurs

* Among Cannibals, 1890, p. 120.

† Ann. Report Smithsonian Inst. for 1879 [1880], p. 285, f. 135.

‡ Ann. Report Smithsonian Inst. for 1879 [1880], p. 286, f. 136.

at one end. I have never seen a shield of this description, nor heard of one, and it is singular that Mr. B. R. Smyth, in his excellent work so often quoted by me, makes not the slightest allusion to such a form occurring in any part of Australia, much less in Victoria, to the Aborigines of which his book was more particularly devoted. The shape of these "shields," provided as they are with a projecting handle at one end, and well compared by Dr. Knight to a cricket bat, reminds one of some of the large wooden so-called swords in use amongst Northern Tribes. I think, however, the matter may be set at rest by the acute observations of the late John Macgillivray, during the voyage of H.M.S. "Rattlesnake." Under the name of "clubs" he notes* three kinds in use at Port Essington, one like a cricket bat with a short handle. Corroborative evidence is afforded by an illustration of Smyth's. He distinctly figures† such a weapon, with a short handle, and a cricket bat blade from Rockingham Bay. Here we have two localities in the north country, both well authenticated, and on this account I cannot accept Dr. Knight's reference of such weapons either to Victoria, or to the category of shields. At the same time the great comparative breadth represented in Dr. Knight's figure is somewhat of a stumbling block, and his statement that such weapons are made of bark, requires I think corroboration.

I may also add that Lumholtz mentions swords made of hard wood, "with a short handle only for one hand,"‡ and gives a plate§ representing a warrior armed with one of these, working himself into a state of excitement previous to the *Borbory* contests (*i.e.*, duels).

I wish it to be distinctly understood that this epitome is not to be regarded as an exhaustive enumeration of all the types of Australian shields—far from it. There are several others already

* Voy. "Rattlesnake," 1852, ii. p. 147.

† Aborigines of Victoria, 1878, i. p. 303, f. 67.

‡ Among Cannibals, 1890, p. 121.

§ *Ibid.* pl. opp. p. 122.

known to me, but from the want of adequate information I have refrained from referring to them, but this I may have an opportunity of doing on a future occasion.

I am indebted to Mr. Edgar R. Waite for kindly identifying the tortoise-shell, and again to Mr. C. Hedley for the excellent drawings accompanying these notes.

PLATE XXXIII.

Fig. 1.—*Goolmarry* shield (broad form); front view. Central Queensland.

Fig. 2.—The same; side view.

PLATE XXXIV.

Back view of the shield represented in Plate XXXIII.

PLATE XXXV.

Tortoise-shell shield; front view. Cooktown District.

PLATE XXXVI.

Back view of the shield represented in Plate XXXV.

PLATE XXXVII.

Fig. 1.—*Goolmarry* shield (narrow form); front view. Saxby River.

Fig. 2.—*Goolmarry* shield (intermediate form); front view. Angledool.

PLATE XXXVIII.

Fig. 1.—*Goolmarry* shield (narrow form); front view. Paroo River.

Fig. 2.—Back view of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3.—Side view, ,,